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24 July 1951

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

Recline

Subject: Staff Coordination of NIE's: Principles and Procedures

1. At the 0900 morning meeting of the National Estimates Board, 6 July 1951, the National Estimates Board reached a unanimous decision to attempt to reduce the time spent by the National Estimates Board in coordination of NIE's with the IAC agencies by authorizing the Estimates Staff to conduct working level meetings with the IAC representatives. It was agreed that, after the Estimates Staff had ironed out as many differences of opinion as possible and arranged draft NIE's presentationally to the satisfaction of the maximum number of the IAC representatives, the National Estimates Board would approve the paper (if it was acceptable) and dispatch it to the Deputies of the IAC agencies with an expression of willingness to discuss major substantive issues but also with a recommendation that the paper go directly to the IAC if there were no major substantive intelligence points at issue.

2. The first attempt to carry out this decision was made by the Estimates Staff in working on NIE-36, "Prospects for Survival of the Present Regime in Burma." A meeting of the IAC representatives and the O/NE task team charged with drafting NIE-36 was convened 13 July 1951 with the Chief, Estimates Staff, in the chair.

3. The Chief, Estimates Staff, opened the meeting of 13 July with a statement roughly as follows:

"The Assistant Director, National Estimates, has asked me, the Chief of the Estimates Staff, to preside at this meeting in hopes that we can put into effect a new procedure by which we can cut down the length of time spent in discussion of the presentational problem of drafting NIE's. Anyone who has been in the business of drafting intelligence papers will recognize that (a) no two men would agree precisely and in detail on the presentation of any given set of ideas; (b) the worst possible way to work out in detail the precise phrasing and presentational structure of a paper is to try to do it in a formal meeting with a large number of interested persons in attendance.

"For these reasons I propose the following procedure for this session and for similar sessions in the future:

(a) Let us insofar as possible concentrate on the discussion of matters of major intelligence interest, particularly taking care to explore divergent views on points at issue;

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(b) Let us not attempt at this meeting to arrive at a precise contractual agreement on the wording of the paper before us; rather let us leave the O/NE Staff members detailed to the task team working on this paper to incorporate all compatible views expressed at this meeting in the most effective way they can devise;

(c) Insofar as possible, jot down in note form suggestions to give to the O/NE task team chairman after the meeting; particularly if these suggestions have to do with phrasing rather than with intelligence issues that are of sufficient importance as possibly to occasion a dissent.

"Insofar as we are able to do so, we will redraft this estimate to reflect the views of this group. After the National Estimates Board has approved the redraft, assuming that it does, the estimate will then be referred to the IAC Deputies with a note requesting their concurrence in sending the paper to the IAC but also expressing the willingness of the National Estimates Board to meet with IAC Deputies or their representatives to discuss and resolve any differences of views on major intelligence issues that have not been resolved as a result of the working level conference."

4. The IAC representatives present at the meeting on 13 July expressed unanimous approval of the experiment with working level coordination of NIE's. The meeting proceeded in a harmonious and constructive fashion. All of the IAC representatives passed along to the task team chairman suggestions which they agreed were not of sufficient importance to discuss in detail at the working level or at the IAC Deputies-National Estimates Board level. The Air Force representative, for instance, submitted five or six pages of suggestions (comparable to the suggestions usually offered at National Estimates Board meetings with the IAC representatives and discussed there at great length) but advised the task team that the Air Force felt strongly about only two of the twenty-odd suggestions. The meeting ended exactly one and one-half hours after it had convened, and the task team was able to redraft the paper, incorporating many presentational suggestions and two major substantive changes that definitely improved the estimate.

5. Insofar as the Staff working level participation in the new procedure is concerned, I think the new technique of coordinating papers informally in the way attempted at the 13 July meeting on NIE-36 was a complete success.



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P.S. Draft estimates in process before the decision of 6 July with respect to Staff coordination will be handled in accordance with the old procedure, whereby the National Estimates Board goes over drafts in detail and approves them prior to their submission to the IAC agencies and whereby the National Estimates Board meets with the IAC representatives as a matter of course.

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